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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 000524

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TAGS: [ECPS](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KU](#)  
SUBJECT: USG COORDINATOR FOR INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS  
MEETS WITH NEW SALAFI COMMUNICATIONS MINISTER

REF: KUWAIT 430

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Matthew Tueller for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C/NF) On 8 April, U.S. Coordinator for International Communications and Information Policy Ambassador David Gross made an introductory courtesy call on Kuwait's new Minister of Communications and State Minister for National Assembly Affairs Shireeda Abdullah Saad Al-Mousharji. Al-Mousharji, a Salafi politician with alleged ties to the Revival of Islamic Heritage Society (RIHS), was appointed to his new position on 25 March (reftel). Ambassador Gross was accompanied by Alan Gibbs of EB/CIP, Econoff, and Econ specialist. Al-Mousharji was joined in the meeting by Under Secretary of Communications Abdulaziz Al-Osaimi. Ambassador Gross congratulated the Minister on his appointment, expressed his desire to collaborate with the Ministry in the development of Kuwait's telecommunications and information sectors, and offered to host the Minister on a visit to the U.S. to meet with USG officials and private-sector telecom executives. Ambassador Gross offered to work with the Minister to identify opportunities for training and professional exchanges and invited Al-Mousharji to nominate junior and mid-level Kuwaiti officials to participate in programs at the U.S. Telecom Training Institute. Ambassador Gross also offered to try to send U.S. experts to Kuwait if the Minister thought it would be helpful.

¶2. (C/NF) Al-Mousharji thanked Ambassador Gross for his visit and expressed eagerness to have Ministry personnel take advantage of training opportunities and professional exchanges in the U.S. He said that within his Communications portfolio, his priorities were to develop the telecommunications sector, the transportation sector, the mail system, and the aviation sector. He said that he was still being briefed by the Under Secretary on the Ministry's major issues and emphasized that he hoped to continue working with the Ministry's historic partners, including the U.S., though he mentioned he had also been approached by a number of Asian and European governments seeking to partner with the Ministry on a variety of projects. Referring to a long-standing billing dispute and ongoing negotiations for new international calling contract, Al-Mousharji said he hoped the Ministry would soon be able to conclude a final agreement with AT&T following the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement in November.

¶3. (C/NF) Comment: Al-Mousharji seemed to genuinely welcome future opportunities to expand the Ministry's relationship with the USG, but he gave no indication of having a clear vision of what he wants to accomplish as Minister. He has no apparent background in communications or technology, though he does have years of experience in government administration working with the National Assembly

and Municipal Council. Al-Mousharji's portfolio as Communications Minister is broad (including telecommunications, information technology, public transportation, ports, rail systems, aviation, and tourism), and his second role, as Minister for National Assembly Affairs is likely to consume much of his attention at a time when relations between the Government and the Assembly are strained. The general consensus among Post's contacts is that Al-Mousharji was appointed primarily to appease Salafi Islamists within the National Assembly. The European CEO of one of Kuwait's two mobile telecom companies described him as "a relatively moderate extremist whom the Government thought it could work with."

¶4. (C/NF) Bio note: Al-Mousharji was born in 1952. Though he studied English at SUNY Buffalo and earned an MBA from Hartford University, his English is broken, and he conducted most of the meeting in Arabic. Despite being a Salafi, he is an active playwright and novelist. He enjoys talking about his writing and boasted that he had turned down a lucrative offer to make one of his screenplays, seemingly about imperialism and political intrigue pre-World War I Arabia, into a film. An Arabic-language website containing some of his writings can be found at [www.almousharji.com](http://www.almousharji.com). Al-Mousharji's uncle and cousin are the franchisees for all of the McDonald's restaurants in Kuwait. Al-Mousharji has four daughters and one son, who is studying management at Kuwait University.

¶5. (U) Ambassador Gross cleared this cable.

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